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THE SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE DURING THE
IRAQ-KUWAITI BORDER DISPUTE: MARCH-
APRIL 1973

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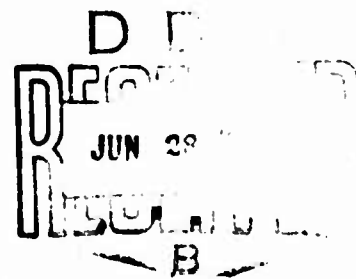Center for Naval Analyses
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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this paper is the visit of Admiral Gorshkov and a contingent of Soviet naval ships to Iraq in April 1973, at the time of the Iraq-Kuwaiti border dispute.
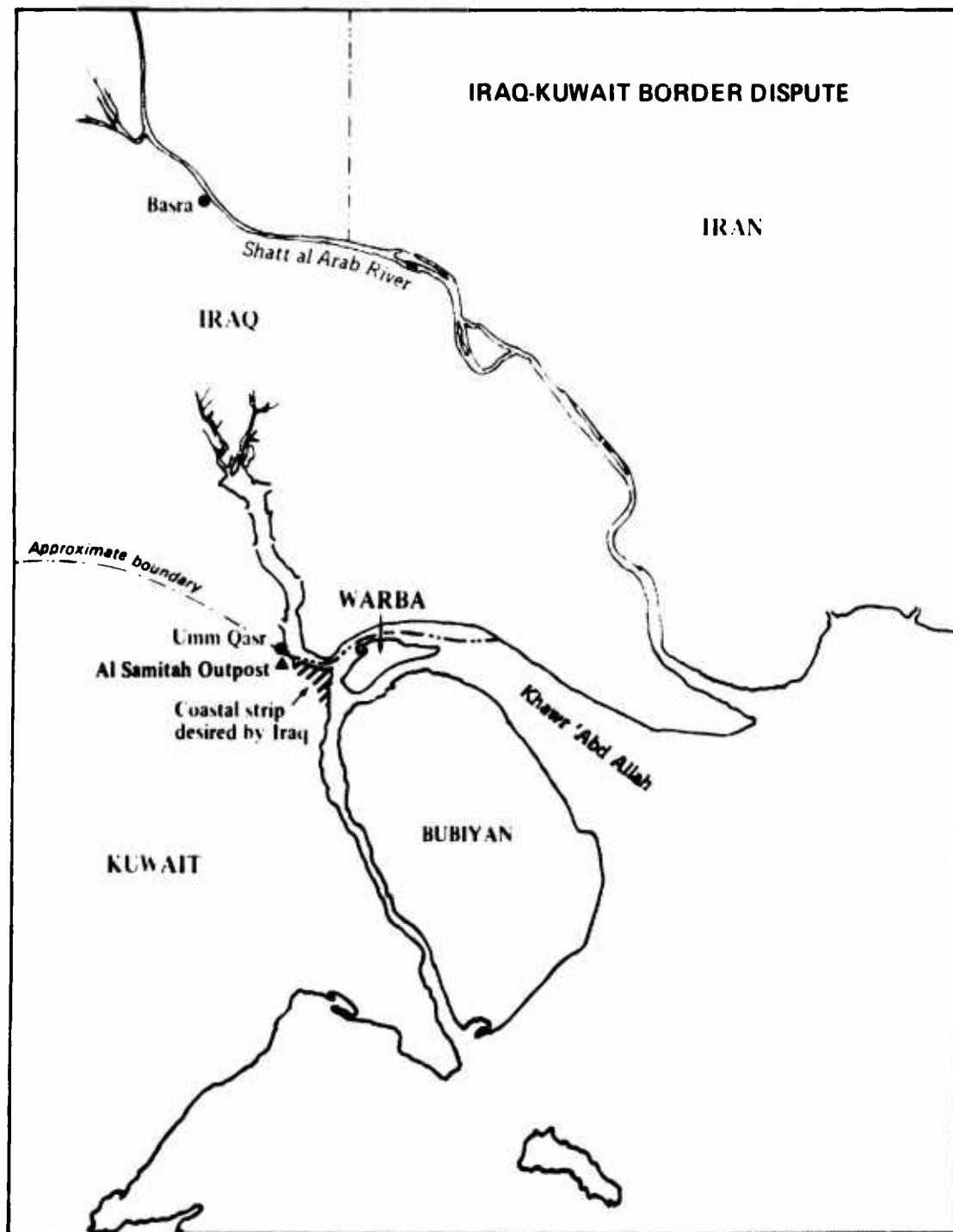
First, the events which occurred prior to the arrival of the Soviets are reviewed. Then, several hypotheses about Soviet behavior are discussed, and a plausible explanation is suggested. The paper concludes with observations on the implications of this diplomacy.

Although the evidence is circumstantial and incomplete on Soviet objectives, there is sufficient evidence that more than a routine port visit occurred. That is, it was an exercise in crisis diplomacy.

THE MARCH-APRIL 1973 IRAQ-KUWAITI BORDER DISPUTE

Following ten years of unsuccessful efforts to formally demarcate the border -- an issue which had been left unsettled when the Iraqis had recognized the independence of Kuwait in 1963 -- Iraqi

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* This paper was largely completed before the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973. Subsequent reflections suggest that there may be linkages between Soviet actions in the Iraq-Kuwaiti crisis and preparations for the War. However, there is no firm evidence of a connection between the two. Consequently, a rigorous re-assessment of the paper has not been undertaken, although an attempt is made to identify some of the possible linkages between the two events.

IRAQ-KUWAIT BORDER DISPUTE

Basra

Shatt al Arab River

IRAN

IRAQ

Approximate boundary

WARBA

Umm Qasr
Al Samitah Outpost

Coastal strip
desired by Iraq

Khawr 'Abd Allah

BUBIYAN

KUWAIT

military forces attacked the Kuwaiti border post of Al-Samitah in the early morning hours of 20 March 1973. The immediate issue was an Iraqi desire to expand the defense perimeter around the port and naval base they are developing at Umm Qasr.

A word about the geography and strategic importance of Umm Qasr is therefore in order. The Al-Samitah post overlooks Umm Qasr and commands the sea approaches to the port from the Persian Gulf. The Iraqis' objective went beyond this border post, however. Subsequent to the attack, the Iraqis demanded that Kuwait cede a strip of coastline surrounding the border post, and the islands of Warba and Bubiyan as well. These areas lie at the entrance of the channel leading to Umm Qasr.

Umm Qasr is being developed as an alternative to Basra, currently Iraq's major port and naval base. For several years, Iraq's movement from Basra to the Gulf--accessible only via the Shatt al Arab River--has been constrained by the Iranian Navy. Teheran disputes Iraqi sovereignty over the eastern shore of the Shatt al Arab, and has unilaterally denounced the treaty under which sovereignty was acquired by Iraq. Given the inimical state of relations between Iraq and Iran, Iranian control of the river is a less than satisfactory situation from Baghdad's perspective. Hence the development of Umm Qasr, which will free Iraqi movements from the watchful eyes and potential control of the Iranians.

Tension over the Iraq-Kuwaiti border had been growing since December of 1972, when the Iraqis began building a road through the disputed area to Umm Qasr and augmented their troops along the border.[1] Negotiations in February of 1973 failed to ease the situation. The Iraqis continued to build their road, brought more military forces into the area and gave every indication of the intention to unilaterally redraw the border. The Kuwaitis protested diplomatically, but to no avail. They then reinforced Al-Samitah and raised the Kuwaiti flag over the post. These moves apparently sparked the 20 March attack. The Iraqis continued to occupy the post until 5 April.

Following the attack, Kuwait asked the other Arab states to mediate. They responded immediately. Arab emissaries visited both capitals during the period 21-29 March. The Arabs generally disapproved of Iraq's methods. The moderate Middle Eastern regimes, particularly Bahrein, Jordan and the Trucial States, were especially sympathetic to Kuwait. The Saudis, who have their own border problems with Iraq, moved troops to their northern border.[2] Bahrein and Jordan offered troops and military facilities to Kuwait.[3] The Arab mediation effort ended on 29 March, and may have prevented an escalation of the conflict; but it failed to get the Iraqis to reduce their demands on Kuwait. In addition to the Arab states, Iran was also sympathetic to Kuwait, and the Iranian press was full of warnings and threats directed at Baghdad.[4]

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The two Western powers with long-established interests in the area--the US and the UK--adopted a "hands-off" policy. The US has no leverage in Baghdad. The UK, according to the Times, did not feel that the security of Kuwait was seriously threatened.[5]

SOVIET ACTIONS AND HYPOTHESES ABOUT THEIR OBJECTIVES

The Soviets immediately gave moral support to Iraq. On 21 March, Tass broadcast the official Iraqi version of the border incident, blaming Kuwait for the attack.[6] Except for this statement, however, Soviet media made no specific mention of the crisis. While the Soviets outwardly assumed a low profile in the crisis, it soon became obvious whose side they were on, and this is important. Despite their patron-client relationship with Iraq, the Soviets have walked a diplomatic tightrope in the Gulf. They call it a policy of non-involvement, but it is more accurately described as a policy of even-handedness towards inter-state conflicts in the area. Or so it was until March of 1973.

The second public Soviet move came on 30 March when Tass announced that Admiral Gorshkov would pay a "friendship" visit to Iraq "during the first half of April at the invitation of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence."[7] No specific reason for the visit was given; nor did the Soviets announce that the Soviet Navy would also be on hand--but it was. Gorshkov and a contingent of Soviet naval ships visited Iraq 3-11 April. Table I summarizes the sequence of the major events.

TABLE I

IRAQ-KUWAITI BORDER DISPUTE:

SEQUENCE OF MAJOR EVENTS*

20 MARCH   - IRAQ ATTACKS AND SEIZES AL-SAMITAH BORDER POST

21-29 MARCH   - ARAB MEDIATION EFFORTS

21 MARCH   - TASS BLAMES KUWAIT FOR THE ATTACK

30 MARCH   - TASS ANNOUNCES GORSHKOV TO VISIT IRAQ IN EARLY APRIL

3-11 APRIL   - GORSHKOV AND SOVIET NAVY VISIT IRAQ

6-8 APRIL   - IRAQ AND KUWAIT HOLD TALKS ON THE BORDER PROBLEM

8-9 APRIL   - FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOVIET-IRAQI TREATY OF
                  FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION

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* A MORE DETAILED CHRONOLOGY MAY BE FOUND IN APPENDIX A.

This visit spanned the first anniversary of the Iraqi-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation--so it is tempting to dismiss it as a routine diplomatic visit. Given the conflict setting in which it occurred, on the other hand, it is reasonable to ask if the Soviets were not using the treaty anniversary as a cover for some additional purpose. If so, what was that purpose? Four hypotheses suggest themselves.

The first is that the visit was not intentionally related to the crisis. This requires the assumption that Gorshkov's presence was scheduled prior to the outbreak of the crisis--and it could have been. The Iraqis then presented the Soviets with a **fait accompli**. The Soviets did not approve of the Iraqi action and wanted to remain neutral--in line with their past performance in the area--but the visit had been scheduled and the treaty anniversary was upon them. They were trapped and could not cancel the visit without alienating their Iraqi client. A variation of this same hypothesis would be that the Soviets were not watching the situation closely and, oblivious to the political implications of their actions, simply went ahead as scheduled.

The other three hypotheses assume that the Soviets intended the visit to be something more than just an expression of good will.

The second hypothesis is that the Soviet Navy went to Iraq to deter third-party intervention in the dispute. Perhaps they feared actions by the Iranians, or the Saudis, the US, the UK, or

Australia, all of which have interests in Kuwait and naval forces in the Gulf or Indian Ocean.

Third, perhaps the Soviets meant a compellent show of force --to pressure the Kuwaitis to accept the Iraqi demands for the areas surrounding Umm Qasr.

Last, we considered the possibility that the Soviets, because of their treaty commitment, deliberately took steps to express solidarity with Iraq at the time, but did not intend this show of force to directly affect the outcome of the crisis.

ANALYSIS OF SOVIET ACTIONS

The first hypothesis asked if the Soviet presence represented a routine good-will visit, which the Soviets either felt they could not get out of, or saw no reason for changing. For a number of reasons, neither potential explanation is convincing.

Could the Soviets have cancelled their visit? They probably could have. In the past they have done so when warranted by a change in circumstances. They have cancelled or postponed visits to Western European nations when relations suddenly took a downturn. If there were incentives for doing so where the West was concerned, there are even better reasons for doing so when a client is involved. Admittedly, it may be harder to do this and it may cost something with the client--it may seem to signal a strain in relations. But if the objective is to avoid involvement in a client's squabble and remain above suspicion in the eyes of

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the third world, then one does not carry out a routine good-will visit in the wake of the client's aggression--when the political and military uncertainties of the situation loom large. There are consequently arguments and precedents for cancelling visits when unforeseen events have altered the climate of relations between the USSR and host nations; and there are risks in not cancelling, as well as in cancelling, a visit under such circumstances.

Secondly, Moscow did not announce Gorshkov's visit until ten days after the attack. During that time the situation in the Gulf was very tense. The Soviets had not only a good reason to cancel a scheduled visit, but plenty of time to alter course and devise a proper cover story. They did not do so.

Admittedly, they had a difficult calculation to make. With the treaty anniversary upon them, it could be argued that they could ill afford not to make some gesture of solidarity with the Iraqis. However, Moscow was represented at the treaty celebrations by the Soviet Ambassador to Baghdad and a CPSU delegation-- but not by Admiral Gorshkov. This is not surprising, given the make-up of Soviet delegations to analogous treaty events in India and Egypt. There is no precedent for a naval representation. Treaty signings and their commemorations are handled primarily by civilian party and diplomatic figures.

Soviet press coverage of Gorshkov's visit and the treaty anniversary contained no linkages between the two events. The

closest thing to a connection is Gorshkov's arrival statement, in which he noted that his visit was "coincident" with the treaty anniversary. The Gorshkov and naval visits were, apparently, peripheral at best to the treaty celebrations.

Finally, the argument falls apart if the official Soviet position on the crisis is weighed. If Moscow wanted to remain above the issue, then why did it publicly take the position--which was never corrected--that Kuwait had attacked Iraq? In 1969, when Iran contested Iraqi sovereignty over the Shatt al Arab, the Soviet public position was that of "concerned but objective observer" urging both sides to resolve their differences peacefully. Neither side was accused of wrongdoing, or blamed for precipitating the crisis. Moscow's official reaction to the Iraq-Kuwaiti border dispute signalled a different posture.

What about the variation on the first hypothesis--that Moscow slept through the crisis? The evidence suggests otherwise.

First, there is the evidence from the media. Although the press and radio did not refer to the crisis specifically, they were acutely sensitive to Western and Middle Eastern suspicions that the Soviets were master-minding Iraqi moves. They attempted to divorce Iraqi actions from Soviet policy. Particular effort was given to reassuring Iran. The Soviets also wanted to prevent the crisis from creating a bandwagon movement for great cohesion between the West and conservative Gulf states. Indications from

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the media show that the Soviets were clearly aware of and worried about the situation.

The Soviets were in addition, working behind the scenes to rein in their client. The day after the crisis erupted, the Vice President of Iraq went to Moscow for a two-day visit. According to the Iraqi foreign minister, the trip was urgent and connected to developments in the Gulf.[8] Immediately after the Vice President's return, Baghdad moved to cool down the crisis by agreeing to resume talks with Kuwait, and withdraw from the border post prior to the talks[9]--meeting a Kuwaiti precondition for the resumption of negotiations. This suggests that Moscow had exerted pressure on Iraq to abandon the hard-line policy it had been pursuing. The Soviets clearly had an interest in dampening the crisis. They had been working to pull the Arab world together, telling the Arabs that cohesion was a prerequisite for defeating Israel. To that end, Moscow was attempting to prevent inter-Arab squabbles from tearing apart the emerging superstructure of a united front, and diverting Arab attention and resources from the main contest. While the Soviets were apparently sympathetic to Iraqi objectives, they probably did not approve of the methods used to gain the territory in question. So, the evidence from Soviet policy indicators--the press, the Iraqi visit to Moscow, and the effect of the visit on the crisis--is that Moscow was following events closely. The evidence does not support the conjecture that the USSR was duped into a particular course of action.

Finally, the Soviets now have a history of using what appeared to be a routine naval visit to demonstrate and implement commitments to a client in time of crisis. There is the "official visit" to Somalia in 1970, coincident with Somali allegations that they were about to be invaded by the Ethiopians. The Soviets not only stayed beyond the time needed for diplomatic amenities, but dropped all publicity for the visit--curious since such visits usually aim at publicity.[10] There are other relevant examples: a "good-will" visit to Eqypt after the sinking of the Israeli destroyer EILAT,[11] and a "business call" to Sierra Leone in 1971.[12] There are precedents for the use of port visits for more than routine good will and replenishment purposes.

The case at hand appears to be another instance in which a Soviet naval visit went beyond the limits of "good will". A client was in a conflict situation. The Soviets had arranged for a visit by representatives of the military establishment. The visit came off despite the crisis. The Soviets publicly treated the visit vaguely, permitting the inference that they were quite cognizant that the local situation had added another dimension to their presence.

If the Soviets were not trapped into the visit, or did not simply ignore the implications and possible consequences, what did they hope to accomplish by their naval demonstration? This brings us to the second hypothesis: the possibility of third-party intervention was inherent in this conflict. The Iraqis were faced not

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only with evident Kuwaiti resolve in the face of their superior
military might, but also with the strongly negative reaction of
the Arab world.[13] The Saudis sent some troops to their northeastern
border. Ath-Thawrah, organ of Iraq's Arab Socialist Union, singled
out Saudi Arabia from among "imperialist and reactionary circles"
for exacerbating the situation.[14] Outside the Arab world, Teheran
made a gesture of support for Kuwait by offering to come to Kuwait's
assistance if requested. The Iranian press was threatening repri-
sals against Baghdad. The naval forces of the West were also opera-
ting in the Indian Ocean, and could be of concern. The Iraqis had
some cause to be worried.

Whether the Soviets shared this concern is problematical.
However, it was probably not the driving force behind their deci-
sion to deploy--but the evidence is incomplete and circumstantial,
so the possibility that the deterrent motive was an element in
the Soviet decision cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, the follow-
ing should be considered. We have no record of an instance where
the Soviet Navy has deployed against the hypothetical possibility
of third party involvement. Their actions have been in response
to manifest threats. There is no evidence that the West or Iran
made any military or naval moves that the Soviets might interpret
as an intent to become involved.

Verbal threats from the Iranian press must be distinguished
from official policy. The Iranian government took a more cautious
approach, making a Kuwaiti request a prerequisite to assistance.[15]

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Official statements by Iranian spokesmen reflected a reluctance to become involved unless Iraq pushed its attack to the point of threatening Kuwait's existence. However, even if the Iranians were to become involved--or if the Soviets thought they might--it cannot be concluded that the Soviets would have seen this as sufficient grounds to move. There have already been two instances in which the Iranians resorted to gunboat diplomacy--in 1969, when they successfully contested Iraqi sovereignty over the Shatt al Arab River; and in 1971, when they seized the Tunbs Islands in the Straits of Hormuz. Despite the fact that the targets in both instances were Arabs, the Soviets did not react in either, even though the threat to their Arab friends was manifest.[16] Precedent therefore suggests that, where the Iranians are involved, or might become involved, the Soviets are extremely cautious. They have important economic and political interests in Iran, which they have shown they will not lightly risk.

The Saudi diplomatic line was more decidedly one of non-involvement. A statement by the Saudi Royal Cabinet appealed to both countries to exercise "patience and self-restraint" and to settle the dispute peacefully.[17] Although it was rumored at the time that Saudi troops had entered Kuwait, these reports were denied by the Kuwaiti foreign minister. Saudi troop movements on their northern borders appeared to be limited to defensive action,[18] motivated by the concern that Iraq might attempt a final solution

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to its border problems with both southern neighbors. Curiously, however, during the crisis period, Moscow suspended its standing propaganda campaign against the "feudal" and "reactionary" Saudi regime. This would seem to indicate Soviet concern that their own behavior not provoke the Saudis into providing protective support to Kuwait with military force. Whether the Soviets actually perceived Saudi troop movements as a signal of intent to become involved in the crisis is not known. However, the greatest potential for third-party involvement occurred in the week following the crisis. By the time the Soviets arrived on the scene--on the 3rd of April--it was clear to everyone that the crisis had abated and that the dispute would be solved through negotiations rather than by further fighting. The Soviet presence coincided less with the conflict itself than with its resolution. If the Soviets were concerned about intervention, one would expect this to show up more quickly in their naval activity. Given the immediate negative reaction of Iraq's neighbors, one would expect Soviet units to have gone to Iraq as fast as possible after the border attack, rather than wait two weeks as they did. Finally, while third-party intervention was a possibility, it was never a strong probability, and the Soviets were in a position to make the same assessment.

Let us go on to the third, or "compellent show of force" explanation. The visits coincided with the resumption of talks between Iraq and Kuwait, 6-8 April. Was it just a coincidence, or

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did the Soviets want to put pressure on Kuwait? There is no evidence that the Soviets attempted diplomatic pressure on the Kuwaitis. Their presence was probably designed to lend support to Iraq's negotiating position regarding the contested territory, but the Soviets apparently did not cross the line between showing passive solidarity with Iraq and actively pressuring Kuwait. And it is difficult to hypothesize a credible motive for their doing so.

The fourth hypothesis -- support of Iraq in this crisis -- would be explained by the Peace Program promulgated at the 24th CPSU Congress, and by the divergence between Soviet and Iraqi policies which seemed to be building up.

The Peace Program advocates cooperative efforts between East and West designed primarily for averting war--for example: liquidation of war in the Middle East; renunciation of the use of force and threat of its use; final recognition of territorial changes in Europe resulting from World War II; collective security in Europe; dismantling of the NATO and Warsaw military blocs; outlawing of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons; prohibition of nuclear tests; creating of non-nuclear zones; and reduction of armed force, armaments and military expenditures by the major states. In contrast to these measures to expand the network of

agreements for reducing direct East-West tension, the Peace Program commits the Soviets "to wage a determined struggle against imperialism...firmly rebuff intrigues and subversion of aggressors ...support the struggle of the peoples for democracy, national liberation[19] and socialism." As such, the Peace Program is describing a policy of "active defense of peace and strengthening of international security."[20] If we are interpreting the Peace Program correctly, then there is a cooperative-competitive dyad which governs Soviet foreign policy. At one level, that of direct relations between the blocs, cooperation designed to maintain the strategic balance, avert nuclear war, and promote detente is stressed. Out in the third world, it is competition for political influence with the West that seems to drive Soviet policies. This seems to imply that in the third world, the parameters for superpower behavior are different from those in the area of most direct East-West confrontation: Europe. In the third world, Soviet support for its friends, including that provided by the Soviet military establishment, is not only sanctioned but dictated by the broader Soviet objective of denying to the West any advantage which is detrimental to the interests of the USSR or its third world clients. During the visit of the Iraqi Vice President to Moscow following the border attack, Kosygin seemed to view the propriety of the dispute in terms of the Peace Program formula. In a veiled reference to the conflict, he observed that "inequitable and predatory agreements

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and treaties" remained in the aftermath of the disintegration of colonialism which "set third world nations at loggerheads." Kosygin went on to pledge continuing support for Iraq in "consolidating its national independence".[21] Under this interpretation, the naval presence would be seen as tangible support for border adjustments which would more reliably insure Iraq's security against her less "progressive" and non-Soviet oriented neighbors (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait). By supporting rectification of the territorial status quo between Iraq and Kuwait, the USSR objective was, in part, to lessen Iraq's dependence upon its neighbors' good will for the protection of its maritime and petroleum operations. In demonstrating for Iraq, the Soviets were also indirectly demonstrating against imperialism--by challenging a border arrangement left over from the colonial period.

Soviet behavior may also be explained by the divergence between Soviet and Iraqi policies which seemed to be building up in early 1973. Iraqi domestic and foreign policies were being invigorated by the nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company. The Iraqis had gained a new self-confidence and assertiveness in determining their own future. The immediate result was that Iraqi policies had become more adventuresome--and increasingly independent of Moscow's preferences. As a result, long-standing Iraqi-Soviet differences reemerged more sharply--treatment of the Kurds, a "united front" government, Iraqi overtures to the West. For the

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Iraqis, a particular sore point was Moscow's effort to remain in good standing with both themselves and Iran. This led to an erosion of Soviet credibility and prestige in Baghdad. With Iraq showing growing signs of restlessness, the Soviets were no doubt concerned that Iraq might go the way of Egypt. The crisis offered the Soviets a low-cost opportunity to shore up their relations with Iraq--in particular to compensate for their lack of support of Iraq in past disputes in the area. This is not to say that--assuming this assessment of Soviet objectives is correct--the Soviets were successful. There do not seem to have been any post-crisis modifications in Iraqi policy that would indicate that the Iraqis were properly grateful for Soviet support. But, demonstrating opposition to a border delineation left over from the "colonial" era was one way of attempting to gain credit with their client, and anything the Soviets could do to refurbish their "progressive" credentials with Iraq would go on the plus side of the ledger.

The generally negative world reaction to Iraq's aggression provided the USSR with an opportunity to demonstrate to Iraq the benefits of strong ties with Moscow; and, given the transitory nature of patron-client relationships, the benefits of such association have to be periodically demonstrated.

The foregoing assessment describes possible motivations for Soviet overt solidarity with Iraq.' It is not intended to obscure the equally important inference drawn earlier--that the USSR was

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apparently discreetly pressuring the Iraqis to cool down the crisis. It may well be that Moscow objected not only (or perhaps, not so much) to Iraqi methods, but also to Baghdad's timing. Now that the 1973 Arab-Israeli war is history too, we know that it was originally planned for the Spring of 1973.[22] Under this timetable, the Iraqi offensive could become a critical negative factor in sustaining Arab unity for the war against Israel. The seeming ambiguities in Soviet policy in the Iraq-Kuwaiti dispute may perhaps be due to the pursuit of conflicting objectives -- to demonstrate support for the singular cause of a client while, at the same time, preventing that cause from fracturing the momentum that was building toward unity in the Arab world. Table II summarizes the evidence for and against each hypothesis examined.

To summarize, hypotheses one through three do not satisfactorily explain Soviet behavior in this case. Something else was intended. Hypothesis four is a more reasonable explanation of Soviet behavior. Of course, one could argue that the unknown and ambiguities in this situation preclude judgment or suggest another objective not identified here. But, on balance, there is sufficient evidence that something more than a routine naval visit took place-- that is, it was an exercise in crisis diplomacy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE SOVIET BEHAVIOR

What are the implications of this case for future Soviet naval diplomacy? In this case, Soviet naval operations had very low military content. Their policy was characterized by discretion

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TABLE II

Summary of Alternative Explanations of Soviet Naval Visits

Hypothesis I: Only a routine good will visit.

Evidence For

- Visit may have been scheduled prior to crisis.
- Visit took place coincident with treaty anniversary.
- For these reasons, Moscow had to carry out the visit, despite intervening events.
- Soviet media carefully divorced Iraqi actions from Soviet policy.
- No evidence of direct Soviet involvement in the crisis.
- The Iraqis may have duped the Soviets into demonstrating more support for them than the USSR would have wished to do.

Evidence Against

- There are precedents for Soviets cancelling naval visits when a change in circumstances warranted.
- In this case, the Soviets had time and some incentive to change plans.
- If just a good will visit, it is curious that the ships' visit was not announced.
- Gorshkov did not represent USSR at treaty celebrations.
- No precedent for a naval representative at friendship treaties' celebrations.
- Soviet media did not link Gorshkov's visit to the treaty anniversary.
- Prior to the naval visit, the USSR gave verbal support to Iraq, a departure from their past policy towards crisis in the Gulf.
- Moscow was worriedly watching events closely and not oblivious to the implications of their own behavior or duped into a particular course of action.
  - a) Media sensitivity to political implications for USSR of Iraqi actions.
  - b) Pressure placed on Iraqi Vice President to cool down crisis.
- Precedents exist for the use of "routine" naval visits to demonstrate and implement commitments to clients in time of crisis.

Hypothesis II: Soviet naval presence intended to deter third party intervention.

Evidence For

- There is insufficient evidence to conclude that Iran or Saudi Arabia might not have intervened, or that Western naval forces operating in the area might not have come to Kuwait's assistance.

Evidence Against

- No precedent for Soviet navy's deploying against the hypothetical possibility of third party involvement.
- Iran and Western powers made no military/naval moves immediately following the border attack that could be interpreted as an intent to become involved.
- Soviets show no verbal concern for Saudi troop movement. Saudi diplomatic line was non-involvement.
- Soviet visit occurred after the height of the crisis when the possibility for third party intervention appeared more likely.
- Soviets capable of assessing the credibility of third party threat to Iraq.

Hypothesis III: Soviet naval presence intended to put pressure on Kuwait to accept Iraqi demands.

Evidence For

- Visit coincided with the resumption of negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait.

Evidence Against

- No evidence that Soviets attempted to put diplomatic pressure on Kuwait.

Hypothesis IV: Soviet naval presence intended as a demonstration of solidarity with Iraq.

Evidence For

- There is sufficient evidence that more than a routine good will naval visit was intended.
- Soviet behavior does not indicate that a compellent or deterrent show of force was intended.
- Soviet presence intended as an additional restraint upon the conflicting parties in order to maintain Arab Unity for the war against Israel.

Evidence Against

- Ambiguities and unknowns in this case preclude judgment.

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and their actions posed little if any immediate threat either
to Iraq's adversaries or to the balance of powers in the area. It
is consequently tempting to dismiss this operation as a minor occur-
rence, with no appreciable effects. Indeed, supporting a client
on the offensive may not mark a complete departure in Soviet use
of their fleet for political purposes. There is the ambiguous case
of the West African patrol which may provide a precedent.[23] And
the case of Iraq does not deny "the rules of the game,"[24] since
Kuwait had no Western patron to assist it in this time of adversity.
Nonetheless, Soviet behavior was unusual. This is the first time
that we have seen the Soviet navy undertake a demonstration sup-
porting a client who was upsetting--rather than attempting to
restore or maintain--the status quo between itself and another
sovereign state.* Moreover, if we look at the Iraqi case together
with the Soviet transport of Moroccan troops to Syria prior to
the 1973 Arab-Israeli war,[25] there appear to be linkages between
the two and to the war. Both actions supported the Soviet aim
of getting and keeping the Arabs together for the war against
Israel. It looks as if, in the third world at least, and outside
the context of superpower naval interaction, the Soviets are becoming
increasingly activist and adventuresome in the exercise of naval
diplomacy. In the past, we have suggested that where the danger of

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* Even if one considers the West African patrol to be a
strategically offensive operation, it should be remembered that
the target is a colonial regime which does not enjoy the respect
of the international community.

the opposing superpower getting involved was non-existent or minimal, the Soviets would be less inhibited in employing naval force to pursue their interests. These cases from the first half of 1973 tend to confirm this suspicion. The Soviets still seem to be experimenting with the use of naval forces to support their interests in the third world--and apparently there is still room for expansion in that role.

The growing use of naval forces in situations that go beyond the defensive suggests that intensification of Soviet naval diplomacy may be the trend for the foreseeable future. Especially now, in an era of detente, this trend appears anomalous. But, as the Soviet Peace Program implies, detente is a two-edged policy: cooperation and competition. Detente does not seem to encompass a lessening in the spirited competition on the periphery--even though the spotlight is on cooperation in the main arena of great power politics. Soviet behavior in the Iraq-Kuwait crisis provides an example of the peace program in operation.

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8. Beirut <u>An-Nahar</u> in Arabic, 27 March 1973, pp. 1, 12.

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10. James M. McConnell, "The Soviet Navy in the Indian Ocean," CNA Professional Paper No. 77 (August 1971), p. 11 [Reprinted in Michael MccGwire (ed), <u>Soviet Naval Developments: Capability and Context</u> (New York: Praeger, 1973)].

11. Al-Ahram, 25 October 1967; "Russia Claims It Saved Egypt;" <u>The Times</u> (London), 27 October 1967, p. 4.

12. Robert G. Weinland, "The Changing Mission Structure of the Soviet Navy," CNA Professional Paper No.80 (November 1971), p.12. [Reprinted in MccGwire (ed.), op.cit.]

13. The Iraqi Government appeared surprised by the generally negative Arab reaction to its seizure of Kuwait territory. The Iraqi foreign minister in an effort to downplay the seriousness of the dispute and the need for Arab mediation was quoted as saying "the issue does not deserve all this clamor." (An-Nahar in Arabic, 27 March 1973, pp.1,12). Ath-Thawrah accused Kuwait of "magnify[ing] the incident hundreds of times..." and Saudi Arabia of "trying by all overt and covert means to exacerbate the situation and magnify the problem as much as possible." ("A Plan Exposed Through Its Motives and Aims," 27 March 1973).

14. Ath-Thawrah, 27 March 1973.

15. Teheran Domestic Service in Persian 1630 GMT 12 April 1973, FBIS,V, No.72 (13 April 1973), p.K1.

16. For the latter case see: James M. McConnell and Anne M. Kelly, "Super Power Naval Diplomacy in the Indo-Pakistani Crisis," CNA Professional Paper, No.108 (February 1973), p.2 [Reprinted in MccGwire (ed.), op.cit.]

17. Riyadh Domestic Service in Arabic 0400 GMT 21 March 1973, FBIS,V, No.55 (21 March 1973), p.B4.

18. Jim Hoagland, "Kuwait Questions Arab Policy," Washington Post, 31 March 1973, p.A22.

19. Emphasis added. As employed by the USSR, wars of "national liberation" is an amorphous term, difficult for us to define, as it lacks a consistent theory. It seems, however, to cover any movement or conflict which is perceived by Moscow to enhance national independence and security by opposition to "imperialism" and "neo-colonialism"--i.e. Western policies/ interests in the third world. See: Stephen P. Gilbert, "Wars of Liberation and Soviet Military Aid Policy," Orbis, X, No.3 (Fall 1966), pp.839-858.

20. Emphasis added. The Peace Program has been described by Brezhnev in a speech to the 24th CPSU Congress, see: "Proceedings of the 24th CPSU Contress," Vol.2 "Text of Brezhnev Report," FBISSOV-71-62-17. See also: "Leonid Brezhnev Speech Moscow World Peace Congress" (26 October 1973), FBISSOV-73-208-40, No.208, Supp.40 (29 October 1973).

21. Moscow Tass in English 1450 GMT, 22 March 1973, FBIS, III, No.57 (23 March 1973), p.B1.

22. Edward R.F. Sheehan, "Sadat's War," New York Times Magazine, 18 November 1973, pp. 35, 112-120.

23. The West African Patrol maintained since 1970, is clearly defensive in the tactical sense, it deters further Portuguese raids on Conakry, Republic of Guinea. Strategically, it is a defensive operation insofar as its objective is to prevent the overthrow of the Touré regime, but an offensive operation insofar as it permits the Guinea (Bissau) insurgency mounted from the Republic of Guinea to maintain and expand its offensive actions against the Portuguese colonial regime.

24. McConnell and Kelly, op.cit., pp.7-9. The authors suggest that "rules" are emerging to discipline superpower behavior and expectations in the third world. According to the "rules of the game", it appears permissible for one superpower to support a friend against the client of another superpower as long as the friend is on the defensive strategically; the object must be to avert decisive defeat and restore the balance, not to assist the client to victory. It appears that offensive actions (e.g., the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956) are ruled out, but not defensive, limited intervention (e.g., Lebanon 1958, Egypt 1970, Operation Linebacker 1972).

25. Washington Post, 22 April 1973, p.A6

APPENDIX A
IRAQ-KUWAITI BORDER CRISIS
CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Dec 72   Iraq masses forces on border with Kuwait; Iraqi road
             building operations from Umm Qasr penetrate into Kuwaiti
             territory.

26 Feb 73   Kuwait's foreign minister and seven-man delegation make
             three-day official visit to Baghdad to discuss border
             situation. Visit results in no agreement on border,
             but both sides agree to continue talks. Iraqi foreign
             minister Baqi accepts invitation to visit Kuwait, but
             no dates are set for visit.

1-6 Mar   Iraq begins concentration of troops on border with
             Kuwait.

11 Mar   Kuwait sends a memorandum to Iraq asking for completion
             of the demarcation of borders "to prevent the occurrence
             of problems between the two countries."

13 Mar   Kuwaiti foreign minister reveals that the question of
             extending the Shatt al Arab pipelines to Kuwait is
             currently under study. Claims Iraq took military
             measures against Kuwait because latter rejected Iraq's
             demand for right to build pipeline and extraterritorial
             port on Kuwaiti territory.

17-20 Mar   Kuwait reinforces Al-Samitah border post. Moves intended
              to protest Iraq's building on land Kuwaitis believe to
              be theirs.

20 Mar   Iraq attacks and seizes Al-Samitah border post and shells
              another post overlooking Umm Qasr.

20 Mar   General mobilization of Kuwaiti armed forces ordered.
              Kuwaiti National Assembly demands that Iraq withdraw
              its troops from Kuwaiti territory and stop all military
              acts against Kuwait immediately. Foreign minister asks
              friendly governments to use influence to convince Iraq
              to avoid further "unreasonable" acts.

20 Mar   Iraqi interior minister accuses Kuwait of attacking
              Iraqi forces during maneuvers.

20 Mar   Leaders of Bahrein, Jordan, and Lebanon call Emir of
              Kuwait to convey "kind sentiments toward Kuwait."

20 Mar   Kuwait closes borders with Iraq and the Iraqi News
              Agency office.

20 Mar   Qatari foreign minister denounces Iraqi attack and
              occupation of Al-Samitah.

20 Mar   Saudi Arabian Royal Cabinet appeals to Iraq and Kuwait
              to exercise "patience and self-restraint."

20 Mar   Kuwait proclaims a state of emergency.

20 Mar   All Arab ambassadors to Kuwait summoned to foreign
            ministry.

20-27 Mar   Iraqi forces remain in place.

21 Mar   USSR in only media reference to conflict, broadcasts
            official Iraqi version of border incident.

21 Mar   Bahrein reported to have placed its armed forces and
            airports at the disposal of Kuwait.

21 Mar   Premier of the Yemeni Arab Republic cables Kuwaiti
            Crown Prince to express regret and denunciation of
            Iraq's occupation of Kuwaiti territory.

21 Mar   Vice President of the Revolutionary Command Council
            of Iraq, Saddam Husayn Tikriti, begins four-day
            "friendly" visit to Moscow.

21 Mar   Arab mediation efforts begin in the persons of Arab
            League Secretary General Mahmud Riyad, Syrian foreign
            minister Abdal-Halim Khaddam, and Murad Ghalib, special
            envoy of the president of Arab Republic of Egypt.

24 Mar   Tikriti returns from Moscow, reports to President Bakr.

24 Mar	After three-day hiatus for Ruz holiday, Iranian news-papers feature and condemn Iraqi raid. Editorials pointedly warn Iraq against attacking Kuwait. Kayan International warns Iraq of reprisals.
26 Mar	Iraq's ambassador to Kuwait states that an Iraqi dele-gation headed by the foreign minister will arrive in Kuwait during the second week of April, or earlier.
27 Mar	Al-Akhbar (Egypt) reports that Arab League Secretary Mahmud Riyad has stated that Iraq's president has ordered the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.
27 Mar	Ath-Thawrah (Iraq) attacks Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for exacerbating the border dispute.
27 Mar	Lebanese newspaper An-Nahar reports that Iraq began moving soldiers and equipment. The movements were not the beginning of withdrawal, but a repositioning of forces to encircle the road the Iraqis were building inside Kuwait.
29 Mar	Kuwaiti newspapers for the first time admit the mobili-zation of Iraqi forces on Kuwait's border last December.
29 Mar	Saudis move troops towards borders. Lebanese paper An-Nahar says Kuwait has received large quantities of

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arms. Rumors reported that Saudi troops have entered Kuwait in area adjacent to Iraqi border.

29 Mar   Kayhan International editorial warns Iraq, USSR on the Kuwaiti border issue.

30 Mar   Tass announces that Admiral Gorshkov, commander-in-chief of the Soviet navy will visit Iraq "in the first half of April at the invitation of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense."

1 Apr   Kuwaiti foreign minister denies Saudi troops or other forces have entered Kuwait.

3 Apr   Iraq announces that an Iraqi delegation headed by foreign minister Baqi will arrive in Kuwait on 6 April.

3 Apr   Tass announces that Admiral Gorshkov departed for Baghdad on a "friendly" visit as the guest of Iraq's Defense Ministry. Soviet naval units arrive in Umm Qasr.

4 Apr   All Kuwaiti papers affirm that the crisis is about to be solved and that the Iraqi withdrawal will take place tomorrow.

4 Apr   Gorshkov visits Iraqi President Bakr.

4 Apr   Iraq announces that it informed Kuwait privately earlier in the week that it will drop its claim to Kuwait border

territories if Kuwait cedes Bubiyan and Warba Islands.
The Iraqi foreign minister demands "full" possession of
the islands.

4 Apr   Iraqi foreign minister, in an interview with the Lebanese
magazine As-Sayyad, says the Arab mediation effort is
unnecessary; terms the existence of Al-Samitah post a
"problem".

4 Apr   Gorshkov meets with Iraqi defense minister Shihab.

5 Apr   Iraqi troops withdraw from Al-Samitah.

5 Apr   Gorshkov visits Mosul and Al-Hadr in northern Iraq.

5 Apr   Kuwaiti paper Ar-Ra'y Al-Amm says Soviet warships as
well as other naval vessels believed to be British or
US are steaming toward northern part of the Gulf, while
Saudi troops are reported to be concentrated close to
Iraq-Kuwaiti frontier. Paper also reports intense air
activity over the entire northern part of the Gulf West
of Kuwait, and intense activity at Dhahran and air bases
in eastern part of Saudi Arabia.

6 Apr   Iraqi foreign minister and delegation accompanied by
Yasir Arafat arrive in Kuwait to begin talks on the
border situation.

6 Apr	The Lebanese newspaper An-Nahar states that "four Soviet naval units have been in Iraqi waters since yesterday."
7 Apr	Gorshkov arrives in Basra; visits the headquarters of the naval and coastal defense forces.
8-9 Apr	Gorshkov visits Umm Qasr. Unlike the publicity given to all other portions of Gorshkov's itinerary, no announcement is made at the time of the Umm Qasr visit.
8 Apr	Celebrations marking the first anniversary of the Soviet-Iraqi Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation begin.
8 Apr	Iraqi delegation completes two-day visit to Kuwait.
9 Apr	Gorshkov returns to Baghdad "after a two-day visit to Basra Province."
9 Apr	Kuwait sends memorandum on border to Iraq.
10 Apr	Tikriti receives Gorshkov.
11 Apr	Gorshkov departs Baghdad for Moscow.
11 Apr	Kuwait foreign minister states that negotiations with Iraq have failed. Talks described as a "presentation of terms by Iraq." Kuwait refuses to discuss Islands of Warba and Bubiyan until borders are demarcated.

11 or 12   Soviet naval units depart Iraq.
  Apr

12 Apr   Iranian Prime Minister Hoveyda tells London press con-
            ference that although Iran has no joint security arrange-
            ments with Kuwait, Iran would consider a Kuwait request
            for Iranian aid, should such a request be made.

14 Apr   Kuwait's Ar-Ra'y Al-Amm says that "Kuwait will soon
            initiate diplomatic activity...in the Gulf area with
            the aim of establishing diplomatic coordination....to
            prevent any foreign intervention which might affect the
            area's safety and security."

18 Apr   Iranian newspaper Ayandegan states that "that the
            Iraqis did not go too far...was due to the fact that
            they knew they should not force Kuwait to turn to Iran."

25 Apr   Kuwait says it is prepared to conclude a long-term lease
            contract with Iraq regarding Warba Island providing Iraq
            agrees to, and recognizes a definite demarcation of the
            border.

25 Apr   Kuwaiti forces return to the Al-Samitah post.

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